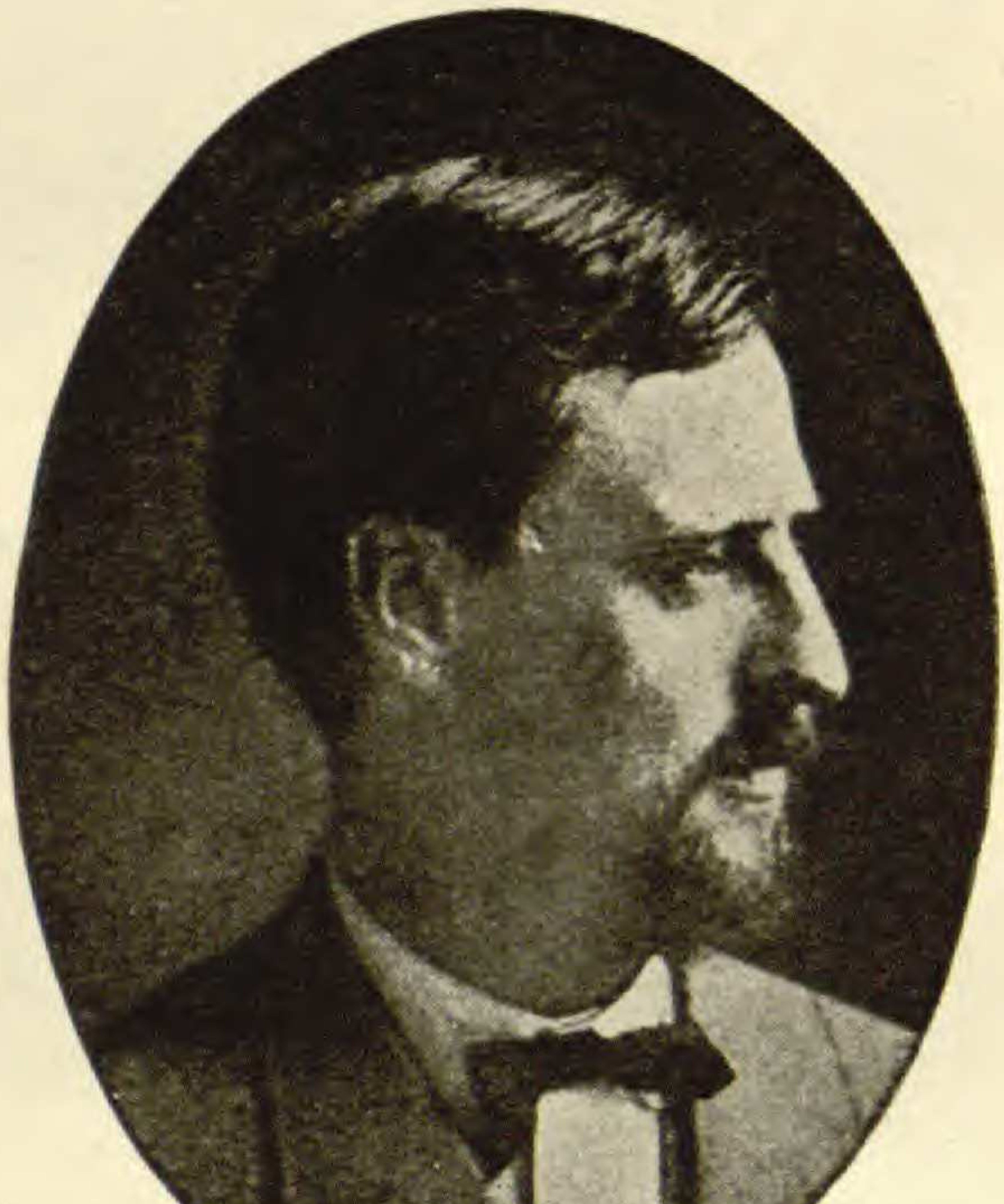
BRIEFER ARTICLES

COUNT SOLMS-LAUBACH[1]

(WITH PORTRAIT)

By the death of HERMANN, Graf zu SOLMS-LAUBACH, on November 24, 1915, Germany has lost the most distinguished of her botanists and the world of science one of its most impressive figures. Count SOLMS was born on December 23, 1842, and had thus nearly completed his seventy-third year. He came of one of the most ancient of German families, who were sovereign in their own domains down to the year 1806. He himself devoted his life wholly to science, holding the professorship of botany first at Göttingen and afterward at Strassburg. He resigned the latter post a few years ago, but continued to live in the town, surrounded by his university friends.



His work extended to every department of botany. Beginning with an important series of researches on parasitic phanerogams, he subsequently monographed several natural orders, including the screw pines. His interest in the morphology of flowering plants continued in later years; in 1900 he described the remarkable crucifer *Capsella Hegeri*, with indehiscent fruits, regarding it as a mutant of the common *C. Bursa-pastoris*. He was always interested in variation, and carried out important investigations on the history of cultivated plants, such as the fig, the pawpaw, wheat, tulips, and strawberries. In embryology

[1] From a biographical sketch published in *Nature*, January 13, 1916.

he showed that in certain monocotyledons the growing point of the embryo is terminal, as in dicotyledons.

In addition to the flowering plants, his systematic researches extended to every class of cryptogams. One of his most remarkable works in this field is his monograph of the Acetabulariaceae, a family of calcareous algae with an ancient fossil history. This was published in 1895 in the *Transactions of the Linnean Society*, and was his only paper written in English. His book on the *Principles of Plant Geography* (1905) treats in an original manner of the leading conceptions in this great subject.

Perhaps the most important of all his work was that on fossil botany. His *Einleitung in die Paläophytologie*, published in 1887 and translated for the Oxford Press in 1892, was of the utmost importance in bringing home to botanists the value and significance of the geological record as affecting plants. Among his special papers may be mentioned his brilliant work on the Isle of Wight fossil *Bennettites Gibsonianus* (1890; translated 1891), the type of the mesozoic cycadophytes; on the Cycadofilices *Protopitys, Medullosa*, etc.; on plants of the Devonian and Lower Carboniferous of Germany; and on *Psaronius*. In a quite recent paper on the last-mentioned group he elucidated, for the first time, the true nature of the root zone. The remarkable recent progress of paleobotany is in a great degree due to his researches.

Count SOLMS became a foreign member of the Linnean Society in 1887, of the Royal Society in 1902, and of the Geological Society in 1906. He received the gold medal of the Linnean Society in 1911, and was made a Sc.D of the University of Cambridge at the Darwin Celebration in 1909. He was a striking and original personality, of rare intellectual power, and a born leader of men.—D. H. SCOTT, *Royal College of Science, London*.